

Issue One May 2014

aargh!

Aotearoa Anarchist Review



THE
Freedom
SHOP



A sad, flippant kind of nihilism

Sadly, flippantly, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon
sighed over his proofs, gave up on religion,
longed to return to the countryside.
Nihilistically, he placed type in its rows.



Peter Kropotkin sadly brushed his flippant beard,
packed his nihilistic surveying gear for Manchuria.
In prison, Mikhail Bakunin's sad teeth all fell out;
he thought, flippantly, of Prometheus chained to his rock.



Exiled to Siberia, he plotted his nihilist escape.
Emma Goldman smoked her forty sad cigarettes,
flicked away their flippant butts.
Nihilistic on the dance floor, she waltzed the Anarchist's Slide.



Buenaventura Durruti was always on the run: fleeing Spain,
following the murder or imprisonment of all flippant anarchists.
Hounded out of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Mexico,
it was back home, in the end, that a nihilist bullet got him.



Scruffy-looking Errico Malatesta was perhaps saddest of all.
Homeless, roomless, he sold his flippant sherbet in exile
in the streets of London. When he died, he was annihilated
by the Italian authorities: his body thrown into a common grave.



Neil, you found Bakunin on a bookshelf somewhere,
the words outliving the man by a hundred years.
Took to heart, turned each page, tattered it.
'I would like to know what turned him,'



said your former boss, owner of the Snooty Fox.
'By anarchist spirit,' wrote Malatesta, 'I mean
that deeply human sentiment, which aims at the good of all,
freedom and justice for all, solidarity and love among the people,

which is not an exclusive characteristic of anarchists,
but inspires all people who have a generous heart and open mind.'
On a scrap of brown paper, outside the Police Computer,
you wrote to your friends. 'Here's one anarchist down.'

You hoped there were more, waking up.
'One day we will win,' you wrote. And went to take your place
in obliteration. 'When we can't dream any longer,'
said Emma Goldman, 'we die.'

By Airini Beauvais

The title is a quote from a newspaper describing the anarchism of Neil Roberts, who killed himself in Whanganui in 1982 while attempting to blow up a computer centre holding police records. The poem will be included in a forthcoming book of poetry about Neil.

Twas the night before break in
 and all through the land
 politicians were changing
 the law as it stands.
 Labour and National
 the ACT Party too
 preserving the privilege
 of a criminal few;
 to thief and deceive
 to frame-up and lie.
 In the name of Big Business
 as an SIS spy.

By Treason

A poem written circa 1999 about the SIS break-in to Aziz Choudry's house and the subsequent legislative amendments to the NZSIS Act.

**aargh! is an anarchist periodical
 produced in Wellington, Aotearoa,
 by the Freedom Shop Collective.**

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Welcome to the world of aargh!

WELCOME to the first issue of aargh! (the Aotearoa Anarchist Review and Golfing Handbook*), an anarchist magazine published by the Freedom Shop Collective of Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand. The title of the magazine, aargh! also reflects the way many of us feel about the world a fair amount of the time.

The Freedom Shop, a collectively-run radical infoshop, was founded on 1st May 1995 and after several relocations is now based in the Opportunity For Animals op-shop at 162 Riddiford Street, Newtown, Wellington. Our stock includes local DIY zines, t-shirts, patches, badges, music and print material covering anarchist, feminist, LGBT, indigenous, anti-colonial and other radical currents. The Freedom Shop Collective also produces its own material—pamphlets, leaflets and postcards—and hosts film screenings and public meetings in an attempt to undermine, or at least knock some sense into the political establishment.

aargh! maintains a proud tradition of anarchist publications in Aotearoa. Which in the last ten years include Snap!, Imminent Rebellion, Dissident Voice, The Wildcat Annual, Aotearoa Anarchist and Solidarity. In the more distant past, The State Adversary was a long-running anarchist periodical of the 1980s and 1990s.

Anarchism is a political movement that aims to give everyone an equal role in social decision-making. Anarchists oppose social and economic hierarchies, for example those imposed by capitalism and globalisation. Anarchists are in favour of a worldwide class struggle and flax-roots revolution aimed at creating a self-managed, socialist and stateless social order. Individual freedom would coexist with community-building, by means of truly democratic decision-making based on social and democratic equality.

We welcome contributions for the next issue, both articles and relevant graphics, please get in touch with us at FreedomShopAotearoa@gmail.com

Cheers

The Freedom Shop Collective

*Disclaimer: We reserve the right to change our minds about what aargh! stands for.

GE Myths, promises, missing miracles

By Peppertree

TEN years ago, the moratorium on the release of genetically engineered (GE) organisms into the wild was lifted. But where are the wonder foods, where is the miracle cure for cancer that we were told New Zealand would miss out on if we didn't embrace this technology?



The first time genetic engineering hit the world headlines was back in 1990 when 1400 people fell ill and 19 died in the US as a result of taking L-tryptophan, an amino acid that was sold as a dietary supplement. The manufacturer, a Japanese company, had introduced a new genetically engineered bacillus in the manufacturing process. Although the bacillus itself was not part of the end product, its use had led to a deadly level of contamination with another substance. Still, the most resilient myth around GE is that no one has ever been harmed by it.

The story of genetic engineering is one of myths.

The whole technology was based on a myth called the "central dogma" which postulated that there was a one-to-one relationship between a gene and a particular trait and that this was a one-way relationship. A gene was responsible for making exactly one protein and it wasn't supposed to interact with other genes. More critical scientists have always doubted that this was the case, and the myth was officially debunked when in 2008 the US Government's own Human Genome Project found that there were all sorts of interactions between genes and that these weren't understood at all. But by that time the technology was so well-established that a minor detail like that didn't make any difference.

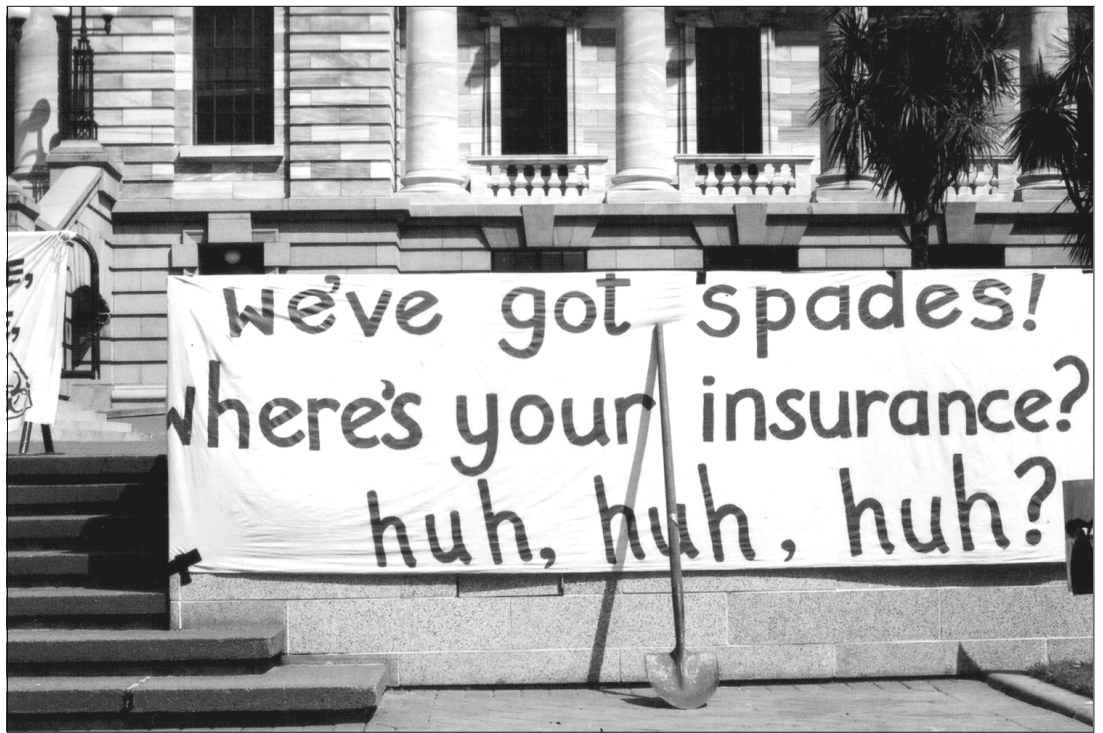
Then there is the myth of "golden rice". Developed in 2000, it was supposed to save millions of lives in the developing world by providing additional vitamin A. Even today, organisations such as Greenpeace or GM Watch are accused of having blood on their hands for campaigning against GE because of this. The fact that even 14 years later, it is still not ready for commercial release and that its beneficial qualities are very much in doubt doesn't enter into the debate.

Closer to home, there is still the myth of GE pharmaceuticals saving people's lives. In October 2012, the media enthusiastically headlined that there soon would be "Allergy Free Milk on the Way." But the milk being developed at AgResearch's Ruakura station near Hamilton was only going to help about three percent of newborn babies, those who were born with an allergy against beta-lactoglobulin (BLG). And for them, goat milk has always been available as an alternative if they couldn't be breast-fed. It would not at all have helped people with a common lactose intolerance. Since then, nothing has been heard of the "break-through".

Another myth is that GE would lead to a reduction, if not the complete phasing out, of chemical sprays in farming. What has occurred, is the opposite. Since most GE crops are of the "Roundup-ready" (or equivalent) variety, farmers have been encouraged to use more, not less herbicide on their crops. By pure coincidence, both the GE crops and the herbicide come from the same company. A study by the US Geological Survey from February 2014 found that glyphosate (the ingredient in Roundup) was detectable in over 75 percent of air and rain samples in Mississippi.

Back to the moratorium. In 2000, the then Labour government set up a Royal Commission of Inquiry into GE, which received close to 10,000 submissions. 90 percent of those were opposed to the release of GE organisms, some were fundamentally opposed to any use of the technology. After politely listening to all the objections, the RCI recommended in 2001 that the country should "preserve options" and "proceed with caution", believing the myth that genetically engineered crops could co-exist with non-GE crops. Contamination, they said, could be avoided.

The government reacted by imposing a two-year moratorium on commercial releases, but continued to allow the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA) to



Banner at parliament during an anti-GE protest in 2003. Photo: Peppertree.

approve field trials. Many people took to the streets; 10,000 marched in Auckland in 2001. When the moratorium was about to be lifted, twice as many marched again. But it is hard to argue against people who believe in myths. The government had believed the myth spread by an organisation called Life Sciences Network, that by the end of the moratorium, the opponents of GE would be convinced by all the wonderful commercial applications that would be lined up with ERMA for approval. The reality is there were none. Not a single commercial application, even now, ten years later.

In the ten years since the lifting of the moratorium, even the number of field trials has declined. Currently, in early 2014, there are only two field trials in NZ. One involves—among many other cows, sheep and goats—the cow Daisy who produces milk without BLG. The other is a trial of pine trees in Rotorua. The interesting thing about this trial is that the two previous pine tree trials were terminated in 2008 and 2010 by GE opponents who chopped the trees down. Another trial of GE onions at Lincoln University in Christchurch was closed down after activists (not MAF, whose job it was) discovered and documented breaches of the containment conditions. There were more field trials happening during the moratorium than there have been in the ten years since.

So NZ is still free of any official commercial GE plantings and the pine trees with genes that make them grow straight have been chopped down—and the sky hasn't fallen down.

But that doesn't mean that GE is off the agenda. It's sneaking in through the back door. As the example of the demolition of the "central dogma" shows, the GE industry is resilient against its myths being deflated.

It is now widely accepted that co-existence was a myth, that GE pollen cannot be told not to pollinate other plants. However, the consequences from that are not a ban on GE, but rather an acceptance of the fact that sooner or later every plant on the planet will be genetically engineered. To add insult to injury, Federated Farmers vice-president William Rolleston (who used to head the pro-GE lobby group Life Sciences Network) in April 2014 accused opponents of GE of hypocrisy because they were invariably consuming GE products.

The hope that the GE industry would disappear simply because their myths would be exposed as such, has been proven wrong. An industry that is powered by both pharmaceutical and agricultural multinationals is not going away just because their products fail. They have proven that they have the power to turn the situation around and sue the users of the failed product out of existence. Or they simply drive them to suicide, as Monsanto has done with thousands of Indian cotton farmers, whose failed harvest of GE cotton has literally killed them.

It will take determined action to get rid of this technology and the multinational companies behind it @@@

Myopia: some thoughts on privacy and surveillance

the ways in which surveillance is an issue of class, race and gender. Moreover, should anarchists be joining the rallying call for more privacy protections from the very state we seek to dissolve?

Surveillance is not conducted equally

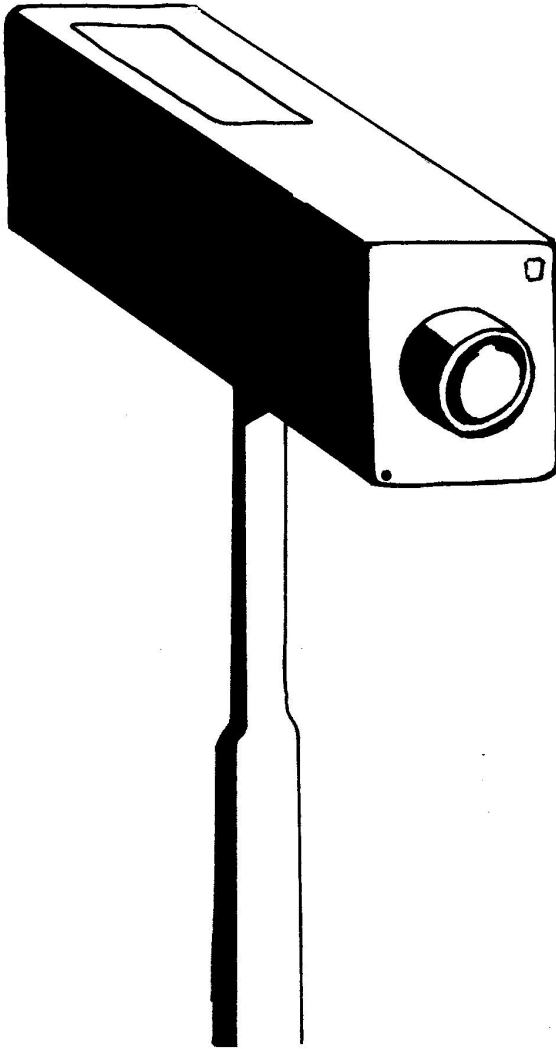
Surveillance is sold to us as essential for our protection. Liberals by definition see as legitimate a degree of surveillance by the state usually under the rubric of crime detection and prevention, although terrorism has been the primary rallying call for the past decade.

Anarchists have roundly condemned the surveillance apparatus of the state, but perhaps we have been remiss in acknowledging that surveillance is not experienced equally. Race, class and gender intersect under the watchful eyes of the state, meaning that those facing marginalisation and oppressions elsewhere are more likely to be subjected to surveillance than others.

One of the most obvious examples of this discriminatory surveillance is through the benefit system. Minute and intimate details about the nature of relationships (including how many nights you might spend at a lover's house during a given week), money, health, housing and education are all subject to intense scrutiny through the Department of Social Welfare. In recent times, drug use and contraception have become legally valid areas for the incursion of the state's gaze.

Clearly this affects those who are in need of financial assistance; it disproportionately affects women and Maori. Over the last few decades, Maori unemployment has been consistently higher than Pakeha—at present up to three times higher depending on age—translating to a higher proportion of Maori receiving benefits. Similarly the Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB) is now the largest benefit,¹ taking care of more than 100,000 New Zealanders, predominantly women.

It is easy to conclude that it is not only the poor, but also specifically, Maori and women, who are the disproportionate subjects of sustained state surveillance.



By Val

IN THE last year, the general public has been far more exposed to, and interested in, issues of surveillance and privacy than any time in recent memory. The revelations of mass surveillance of phone and internet communication by the US National Security Agency (NSA) and its sister agencies has prompted wide calls for protection of privacy on one hand, and accusations of the creation of a surveillance society on the other. Discussions about surveillance are not new to anarchists, but there has been little thought about

Another illustration is the section of the dangerous classes called 'criminals' who are also the subject of a vast apparatus of state surveillance. From the totalising surveillance of the prison, to the lighter gaze of bail or parole, those who are in the prison-industrial complex are under the watchful eyes of the police, Department of Corrections and courts, many for years or even decades of their lives. It goes without saying that those who are captive to the prison-industrial complex are overwhelming poor; they are also again disproportionately Maori. While women are not over-represented within that system, when they are subjected to it, it is under more tightly surveilled conditions.²

Those who have power in society have always sought to control the dangerous classes through mechanisms of surveillance. These regimes of surveillance were largely visible to those being surveilled—embodied in practices such as time-clocks for workers, police cruisers in poor neighbourhoods, probation meetings and drug tests, and CCTV cameras in so-called 'high crime' areas.

The recent upheaval about surveillance has been centered on internet surveillance. In part, it has captured significant public attention because those with relative power in society, educated white men, see that they are affected by it. It is no longer just an issue for those dangerous classes, nor those whose professed political views are an anathema to the ruling classes; it affects anyone who is using digital technology.

Underwritten by a technological imperative, the generalized surveillance of classes of people within society as a form of social control has converged with the directed surveillance of targeted 'enemy' people and groups to produce an environment where everything outside of a narrowly defined pattern of 'normal' is suspect. As we use and interact with digital technology more and more intimately, so too, the power to monitor, track and analyse what, when, where and with whom we are conducting our affairs grows—and, in fact, our 'affairs' have been altered by technology so that we do things that simply did not exist a generation ago.

So is more privacy the answer?

The discourse of privacy has long been the domain of the liberal human rights advocates. Recently, there has been a UN resolution that aims to include new online privacy rights as part of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; lawsuits and policy proposals abound in the US and UK to strengthen privacy rights.

There has been little critique of the discourse of privacy, and there is an implicit assumption that more privacy is a good thing. Similarly, the idea that privacy is a universal right that should be enjoyed and applied equally resonates across the political spectrum even if the boundaries of that privacy are contested.

Some Marxist commentators have equated privacy rights with private property. Christian Fuchs' *Towards an alternative theory of privacy* argues that:

"...privacy rights should be differentiated according to the position individuals occupy in the power structure, so that surveillance makes transparent wealth and income gaps and company's profits and privacy protects workers and consumers from capitalist domination."

Fuchs' has certainly done a good job of calling into question the theoretical foundation of privacy, suggesting that most definitions of privacy are not so grounded. He does not get too caught up in trying to define privacy; his concerns are rather outlining the



critiques to liberal assumptions about privacy, such as its universalism, and illustrating the links between privacy considerations and private property.

However, I do not discount the idea of privacy as an entirely liberal construct though much of it inherently deals with the citizen-state relationship. Journalist Glenn Greenwald recently gave a description of privacy that is worth quoting at length:

“I think the primary value of privacy is personal as opposed to legalistic or constitutional or political, by which I mean it's essential to what it means to be human that we have a private life. We interact with other human beings as social animals, and live part of our lives in the public eye—that's crucial—that's why if you put someone in solitary confinement for twenty-three and a half hours a day like we do in US prisons, it's a form of torture. And it makes people go insane, because we need, as part of our human functioning, to be seen by other human beings and to be perceived by them and understood through the eyes of other people. But equally important to who we are is a realm where we can be free of those judgments, of people watching us.

“That's why people have always sought out realms where they can conduct themselves with anonymity and privacy. Where there aren't other human eyes forming judgments and posing decrees about what they should and shouldn't do. The reason it is so crucial is that it is only in that state that we are free to do the things that other human beings would condemn us for doing. We can be free of shame and guilt and embarrassment; it's where creativity resides, it is where dissent to an orthodoxy can thrive.

“A human being who lives in a world where he thinks he is always being watched is a human being who makes choices not as a free individual but as someone who is trying to conform to what is expected and demanded of them. And you lose a huge part of your individual freedom when you lose your private realm. Politically that is why tyranny loves surveillance, because it breeds conformity. It means people will only do that which they want other people to know they're doing—in other words, nothing that is deviant or dissenting or disruptive. It breeds orthodoxy.”³

Given the ramifications of privacy for obscuring social inequality on one hand, and the ever-widening gaze of state and corporate power on the other should anarchists be joining the rallying call for more privacy protections from the very state we seek to dissolve?

Ultimately privacy is contextual; we can't divorce the idea of privacy from the capitalist, white supremacist, patriarchy we live in. In struggling for privacy from the state and corporate power, then that struggle is ideally centred around and driven by those most affected by the surveillance. All of those incursions and death by a thousand cuts should be resisted (such as changes to the Privacy Act in 2012 allowing widespread data sharing among government agencies and private business).

We shouldn't expect that the state will provide us with any protections, but rather, that it will be forever seeking to erode any rights we have gotten. It will also punish those most marginalised who dare to resist the surveillance apparatus.

The most basic weapon in the struggle is education. In the past, agencies like the police had to use considerable resources even to discover who somebody was and be able to legally prove that. Not anymore, vast data about nearly all of us is available at the fingertips of the powerful. Understanding that even details such as name, date of birth and address should be closely protected is a good starting point.

A struggle for privacy with an analysis that includes the ways in which privacy can be negative, and the ways in which class, gender and race disproportionately direct surveillance are good starting points to defining the steps towards liberation from the gaze of the powerful @@@

Notes

1. This does not include New Zealand superannuation, which is universal, and is by far the largest 'benefit' at 55 percent of the total spend.

2. Maori women are disproportionately represented in prison statistics by a staggering amount: roughly 70 percent of the approximately 600 women in prison are Maori. Conditions for women in prison tend to be more restrictive in terms of visit-or access and work privileges, and release is tightly watched by the state with women often not being able to have access to their children after release. One friend told me she was personally visited by the warden of Arohata Prison after her release, just to “check up on her.”

3. Natasha Lennard. 4 January 2014. Surveillance Breeds Conformity: Salon's Glenn Greenwald interview http://www.salon.com/2014/01/03/the_salon_glenn_greenwald_interview_surveillance_breeds_conformity/



What “Sovereign Borders” really look like

By Peppertree

THE Australian government has introduced “Operation Sovereign Borders”, promising to return the refugee boats, but it doesn’t want anyone to know what that looks like.

Anyone following the mainstream Australian news media will have noticed the venom with which the subject of refugees and asylum seekers has been treated there. That’s past tense because in August 2013, the newly elected government under Tony Abbott declared a news embargo on the subject. For more than six months now, government officials of all departments have not been allowed to release any information about the number of asylum seekers trying to get to Australia, let alone the number of people who die in the attempt.

This kind of measure, which is usually associated with despotic dictatorships and summarily condemned by “western democracies”, is so far the latest development in what has been a race to the bottom of xenophobic fear-mongering.

The subject of “boat people” has been a nasty election topic in Australia for a long time; at least since the ‘Tampa’ incident in 2001. Back then, the Norwegian cargo ship MV Tampa picked up a group of over 400 shipwrecked refugees and headed for Christmas Island with them. The Howard government at the time sent the navy to stop the Tampa and the crisis escalated to the point where the NZ government under Helen Clark managed to score points by offering to accept 130 of the refugees. Of course, this number was subtracted from the pathetic ‘quota’ of 750 refugees who are settled here annually.

It’s been downhill ever since. Various Australian governments introduced various ‘solutions’ in order to reduce the number of people trying to reach Australia by boat from Indonesia. None of them worked, most of them involved detaining people indefinitely in off-shore camps, but all of them had in common that they aimed at deterring people from making the journey.

The current policy of categorically denying anyone asylum who doesn’t arrive by plane and locking them up in overcrowded camps on Nauru and Manus Island is so far the low point.

The camps on Manus Island and Nauru have existed for many years under different governments and policies, but the conditions there have always been atrocious. Suicides, hunger strikes and riots have been daily occurrences, according to both former inmates and ex-staff. The most recent incident took place on 17 February, 2014. In early February, protests had started at Manus Island. The refugees had one demand: to be told how long they would be detained in the camp. Canberra refused to say and after two weeks, the protests erupted into a riot. The uprising was crushed by security personnel from global security company G4S, Papua New Guinean police and locals who joined in, leaving dozens injured and one detainee dead. The Australian government seems to accept this as the price to be paid in order to keep up the deterrence.

In addition to basically abolishing the right to claim asylum—a right enshrined in the UN Refugee Convention which the Australian government signed many years ago—“Operation Sovereign Borders” also entails a “return the boats” policy. This means that any boat captured by the Australian navy will be sent back to Indonesia—notwithstanding the fact that a lot of these boats are shipwrecked before getting anywhere near Australian territory. It is unclear whether it is coincidence or some kind of sick joke that the Australian Navy uses the acronym SIEV (Suspected Irregular Entry Vessel) for the boats they capture.

And this is likely to be the real reason why Abbott doesn’t want any reports on refugee boats—it could possibly expose how many people die as a result of the “push-backs”. When people drown because their boat sinks and no one comes to their rescue—as happened near the Italian island Lampedusa in October

2013—politicians shed crocodile tears about the tragedy. But people drowning as a direct result of government intervention is not a good look, as the Greek government found out recently.

Refugees who have tried crossing the short distance between Turkey and the Greek islands have been reporting that the Greek Coastguard, who works together with the EU border agency FRONTEX, have “pushed back” refugee boats into Turkish waters for some time. This involves different measures, ranging from passing the boats at high speed in order to generate wake that turns the boats around, to actually towing the boats, and it has cost many lives.

On January 20 this year, nine women and three children drowned near the Greek island Farmakonisi. The Greek Coastguard had detected their immobilised boat, but instead of taking the people on board their own, larger, vessel, the coastguard decided to tow the refugee boat. The boat capsized and sank. The 16 survivors report that they were being towed away from Farmakonisi and towards the Turkish mainland. But there are also allegations that the Greek officers actively drowned people. “I lost my wife, my daughter and my two sons. They were intentionally throwing them back into the water. They were swearing at them,” says one survivor. FRONTEX and the Greek Coastguard are blaming each other for the tragedy and the EU Commissioner for the Interior says that the case raises question about the EU border policy.

“Push-backs” are illegal under EU law and a recent report by the German human rights organisation Pro Asyl exposing the practice has led to an official inquiry by the Greek government. The Pro Asyl report lists 90 cases of people who have experienced “push-backs”.

“Our boat was torn and they had tied it with a rope... They took us to the Greek–Turkish waters and threw us one by one in our boat. One of us fell in the sea and we collected him from the water. They were throwing us as if we were garbage. Then they cut the rope. There was no engine, no fuel on the boat and no paddles.” (Interview with a refugee from Syria. 46 men, women, children and babies from Syria were pushed back from the Greek Island of Farmakonisi on 8 August, 2013. Source: Pro Asyl.)

This is what “returning the boats” looks like, and this

is what the Australian government doesn’t want the public to know.

New Zealand politicians like to score points over their Australian counterparts by claiming that things aren’t like that here and that they have nothing to do with the Australian policies. But only a year ago, the government amended the Immigration Act to introduce the option of mass detention, should any ‘mass’ off refugees ever arrive here, bringing New Zealand law more in line with the Australian.

In the past, over 90 percent of those arriving by boat in Australia have been found to be genuine refugees. That is not surprising because anyone desperate enough to embark on a risky journey to the other end of the world must be escaping a life threatening situation. With the new “no entry by boat” policy, these people will eventually—after years in detention—be stranded on Nauru or Manus with nowhere to go. Nauru is a tiny island, roughly the size of Rangitoto in the Hauraki Gulf, which is importing drinking water for its own population and is clearly not in the position to settle any number of refugees. Manus Island is part of Papua New Guinea, a country that is even treating West Papuan refugees as second class citizens.

To make things even worse, the deadly logic of deterrence demands that no other country must allow the refugees to settle either. This became clear when in October 2013, Tony Abbot cancelled an agreement from earlier that year, according to which New Zealand would accept 150 asylum seekers from Australia annually in return for Australian help in the unlikely event of a boat arrival on its shores. New Zealand accepting any number of refugees from Australian-run detention centres would have undermined the Australian policy. In a typically cynical remark, Abbot said: “People ought not think New Zealand is some kind of a consolation prize if they can’t come to Australia.” By accepting that, the New Zealand government has become complicit in Australia’s murderous policy.

Of course there is no such thing as a ‘sovereign border’. Borders are designed to divide people and to keep the poor from harassing the rich. They are an integral part of any nation state and in that respect, New Zealand is no different from any other state @@@

For more information, see the Freedom Shop pamphlet titled *The Myth of the Queue*.



Indifference as a moral option?

By Sam Buchanan

THE world's governments seem to have agreed to accept the Syrian civil war with indifference, or to feign horror as they do nothing in the name of 'non-intervention'.

Syria is unimportant—it lacks oil and most other resources, except people, who don't count for much. So long as President Al Asad doesn't use chemical weapons, he has been allowed a free hand to slaughter or drive out his people. So long as militants don't threaten other countries, they are allowed a free hand to turn a struggle against a dictatorship into a struggle for a different kind of dictatorship.

The most recent debate over intervention in Syria centered on the question of whether Al Asad's forces had used chemical weapons, thus privileging the use of certain forms of horrific barbarity over other forms of horrific barbarity. That Al Asad and his dad before him have been guilty of a string of deadly attacks on civilians appears to be forgotten. Making chemical weapons the point of concern seems to be allowing the US government, with its continual propaganda about 'weapons of mass destruction' in the hands of its rivals, to set the terms of debate and cherry-pick the atrocities that must be responded to.

The mainstream left lauded non-intervention (or the deferring of the decision to the UN, which in practice amounts to choosing non-intervention) as a moral option. Once again, the US government appears to have set the agenda by instilling in peoples' minds that 'intervention' constitutes US missile or air attacks. No other options are presented. Therefore we are presented with the false choice of either doing nothing or supporting pointless and bloody US attacks.

The first great examples of 'non-intervention' were in the 1930s when Britain's conservative party led an international campaign to leave the Spanish people to fight their military and fascists unaided, and to legitimise Mussolini's conquest of Ethiopia. In the case of the Spanish Civil War, as will be the case in Syria, the backers of totalitarianism—the governments of fascist Italy, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany—ignored the ban on support, while the supposed supporters of democracy (with the slightly honourable exception of the Mexican government) re-

mained aloof. The anti-fascist Spanish were left to fight and lose alone, then to suffer under fascism, flee, be executed, or rot in concentration camps in France.

In both Syria and Spain, lack of support for those opposed to dictatorship led to the strengthening of totalitarians—on both sides of the war.

We should not accept concerns about Syria's 'sovereignty'. In other words, believing that the lines on maps drawn by the British and French colonialists when they divided the Middle East into nation states are some sort of sacrosanct barrier which we are morally obliged to respect. When desperate people are fighting a dictatorial regime, or are backing it either out of self-interest or for fear of repercussions from the regime or its possible successors, or are simply fleeing the whole awful mess, we should not be thinking about whether or not to intervene, but what is humanly possible. If nothing else, we can support those who have fled, and deplete the strength of the totalitarians by encouraging others to do so. The people the dictatorship depends on for cannon fodder and labour would be much more likely to desert these tasks if they were assured of a tolerable life—even a temporary one—elsewhere. But no such offer has been made.

The so-called democracies have always known Syria was a repressive dictatorship—the current conflict is simply the old 'cold war' between the government and its people becoming a 'hot war'. Yet the dictatorship of the Al Asads was tolerated, and even welcomed as an ally when the US and its allies went to war with Iraq. Today's 'democratic' governments tolerate and appease dictatorships up to the point of the inevitable break-out of violence between them and their people, then pretend to be horrified, as if they'd only just learnt the truth about their old mates and allies.

It may be that there is little we can usefully do about the situation in Syria. But let us not pretend that doing nothing is anything but an act of either despair or self-interest. The debacles in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate the failures of poorly executed interventions led by the wrong people for the wrong reasons employing the wrong strategies. They should not be used to build a case for isolationism and inaction @@@

Bureaucracy – taking the ‘demos’ out of democracy

By Sam Buchanan

‘DEMOCRACY’ translates as ‘rule of the people’. So why do we so often feel that both local and central government are out of line with people’s wishes?

Anarchists cite a number of reasons why our current system of ‘democracy’ isn’t actually democratic. These include the impact of wealth, the rich having greater ability to influence over both public opinion and those in power, the willingness of politicians to opt out of decision-making and let ‘market forces’ decide the direction of society, and the power of the unelected bureaucracy.

The latter is seldom examined. Bureaucrats are everybody’s favourite hobgoblin, but the way they exercise power is much more than irksome and petty. They are often the chief drivers of political decisions, and, to make matters worse, the more reasonable and less ideological of politicians are the most likely to fall into their clutches than the completely unreasonable. A rabid ideologue, irrationally committed to a particular viewpoint, is much more likely to exert their will and ignore the advice of others and the information they present. Stalin and Murray McCully come to mind.

A few years ago, I worked for a while in the international development industry at a time when Murray McCully took over as minister. He proceeded to gaily chuck out many decades of considered thought on how development should be practiced and institute a structure based on neo-liberalism and putting his mates in charge.

The bureaucrats, long acclimatised to a minister who did as she was told, didn’t know what had hit them. Eventually they either found new jobs or toed the line. Many of his opponents quickly realised which side of their bread was buttered—or funded—and adopted a policy of keeping their mouths shut.

This was a disaster, of course, but you can kind of admire McCully. He took the stance that he had been elected and therefore had a mandate. Democracy is ‘the rule of the people’, the people elected a person with idiot policies, and idiot policies were put into place. That’s how things should be according to fans of representative democracy.

But this isn’t typical. Most often the policies of a politician do not get put into practice—they are stymied by bureaucrats. This is how it works.

Information

One of the great advantages bureaucrats have over information is control of the information supply. The chances are, a senior manager or consultant will have years of experience in a particular field, which a politician is unlikely to match. This allows a bureaucrat to pose as providing unbiased ‘technical’ information. It also allows a bureaucrat to present specialised information to confuse and confound both politicians and the public.

In truth, little information is unbiased. By cherry-picking evidence—and in most cases there is a wealth of information available to either support or oppose a proposal—a bureaucrat can make a compelling case for the side of an argument he or she favours. Often, an evidence-based opposing case could also be made, but neither politicians nor the public are able to work full-time to understand an issue. Bureaucrats can work full-time on a particular issue, and inevitably have a stronger knowledge than politicians and the public who have to get on with other things in their lives. But having a stronger knowledge doesn’t mean you are any less politically biased.

Plenty of activists are experts in particular fields, but see things through ideologically-tinted glasses. Many bureaucrats and ‘consultants’ are the same, just less willing to admit it. They are effectively full-time paid activists, but all the more effective in that they present themselves as simply collecting and passing on information.

Bureaucrats can also harness arguments that they would deride if used by the public. No bureaucrat, particularly if they are an older male in a suit and tie, is ever accused of being emotional or political, which allows them to make emotional and political arguments without being called out on it.

Over the last few years, I’ve been engaged in a on-going battle with the local council over user-pays water. The council planned to install water meters and charge for water by volume instead of charging a flat fee per

household. While some councillors supported the idea, the campaign to convince the public of the merits of user-pays was run by council staff. Council reports suffered many of the faults mentioned above—information was cherry-picked (and sometimes plain falsely reported), information was prevented as fact without research to back it, and political arguments were asserted as if they were accepted fact.

Above and beyond this was emotional presentation of the council's case. One could almost hear the sad wail of violins in the background as they described the unfairness of little old ladies, apparently universally frugal users of water, being forced to pay the same for the water supply service as everyone else, or the thumping of drums as they angrily denounced old men who spent two hours a day watering their lawns. They had no actual evidence, other than anecdotes, to back these claims, yet they insisted that it was their opponents who employed emotional and uninformed arguments.

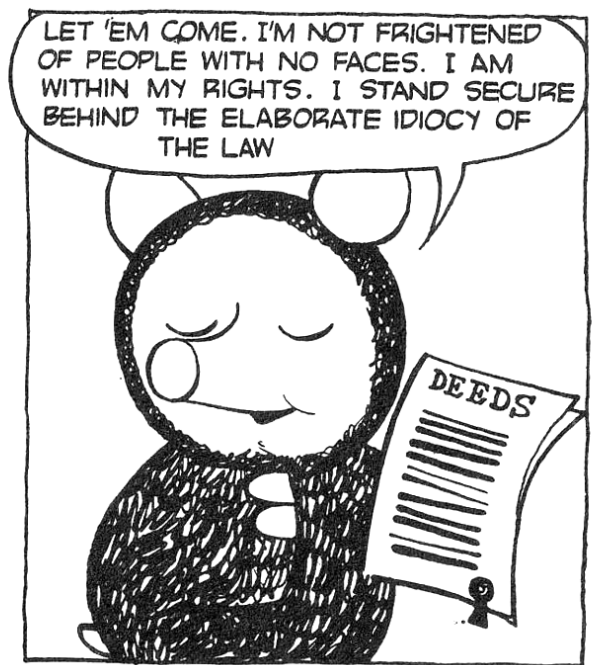
Rules and regulations

Bureaucrats roll in rules, laws and regulations like pigs in mud. They are the bureaucrats natural territory. Most people don't take the time to get their heads around often long-winded rules and policies for decision-making processes. Laws are even worse, few people will even read a statute (an act of parliament), let alone study the case law (judge's decisions) that interpret and define the meaning of the statute. As members of large organisations, bureaucrats can call in lawyers at somebody else's expense to do this work for them, but even without lawyers, bureaucrats can use their knowledge of law and rules to defeat opponents arguments.

In the user-pays water debate mentioned previously, a common device bureaucrats used to oppose other options was 'We can't do that because we won't get a resource consent'. Unless you have a strong knowledge of the resource consent act and its interpretation—a rare skill amongst both politicians and members of the public—this is a hard statement to argue with.

Recently a friend who runs a cafe told me that if you tell a customer you can't do something, they'll argue, but if you say "we can't do that, it's a health and safety issue" they'll simply assume you are following some obscure rule and accept that it can't be done. Bureaucrats use rules to win arguments in the same way.

Laws can also be cherry-picked, with cases that suit your argument being highlighted and those that don't being ignored. There is a public perception that law is a very clear and determined, when actually it is fluid and ever-changing as judges interpret facts, creating precedents that must be followed and making decisions in light of current circumstances. This suits



bureaucrats down to the ground as they are better able to keep track of the shifting legal terrain in their area of expertise.

Career paths

Bureaucrats are usually pro-change—especially large-scale change—it gives them something to do, allows them to build empires and looks good on their CVs. Bureaucrats love to endorse large projects such as building motorways or new buildings or restructuring an organisation. Small grassroots-level projects or simply allowing things to carry on as they are—even when what is happening is working well—isn't going to give a bureaucrat a gold star on their CV. Appearing to have taken charge of a large project, to have expanded an area under their control or acquired a bigger budget can be presented as a sign of success.

One of the great joys of being a bureaucrat is that even if a project fails in social or environmental terms, the bureaucrat won't be blamed. Since they pose as merely carrying out policies, they will be judged as successful for pushing a project ahead quickly and efficiently. The actual responsibility for its impacts can be laid elsewhere. In any case, monitoring and evaluation seldom considers social effects, which are hard to quantify. Most evaluations of projects simply look at timetables and budgets.

All this allows bureaucrats to have much more power than they are supposed to. Bureaucrats are supposed to merely carry out the policies of elected politicians, but their influence is far greater than that, most real government decisions are made, or hugely influenced by the bureaucrats involved.

This is one of the great problems of representative democracy—no matter who is voted in, change is in the hands of the bureaucrats. It's very hard to see a way around this within the present system. We don't want to have to elect a Stalin or a McCully to bring the bureaucrats to heel. It isn't simply a matter of politicians becoming more critical—they can't be experts in every field they deal with.

Another example that came out of my local council was a plan for a new seawall along the beach. The council proposed several options, all of which were rejected by the community, so a new process was created, getting together a group of locals, including architects, environmental experts and residents, to come up with a plan

and work directly with engineers to ensure its feasibility. So far this looks like being a success—the proposal has attracted wide support. It's also been a lot cheaper than the council's methods which require consultants and other 'experts'. Local people are knowledgeable about the environment they live in and about the needs of the community, and the technical details haven't proven difficult for 'non-experts' to get their heads around.

This may not be a perfect example of anarchism in practice—it'll still be funded and approved by the council—but it demonstrates that things can be done in ways which largely take the bureaucrats out of the equation. And it's a step towards the community control and grassroots democracy that anarchists advocate @@@

Workers of the world: relax!

By Glamarchist

HISTORY IN BRIEF

IN MAY 1925, Australian seaman and returned serviceman Noel Lyons was deported from New Zealand. His crime? Arson, murder, or some other unspeakable act? No. Lyons was deported for encouraging his co-workers to agitate for better workplace conditions by taking it easy, by working slower. In other words, for advocating the go-slow.

The government wasn't so worried about the first point. Workers in Aotearoa New Zealand had agitated for better workplace conditions long before Lyons signed on to the SS Manuka, and long after he was shipped off to Sydney. However, the idea of employees working slowly so that the boss lost money while still paying a wage (unlike during a strike), was too radical for the powers that be. Not only did it threaten production (and therefore profits), the go-slow questioned job control, authority, and the work ethic itself. Little wonder Lyons was sent packing, all expenses paid by the state.

The go-slow as a workplace tactic has a long history. One widely publicised example of a successful go-slow was the 1889 Glasgow dockers' struggle. After weeks of costly strike action had failed, the workers decided to end the strike. But they had a novel plan. As Geoff Brown in *Sabotage* notes, the "dockers returned to work, and for two or three days went 'canny', and worked as slowly and inefficiently as the blacklegs [scab labour] had worked." It was not long before the employers gave in to the demands of the workers. The dockers' ca'canny (go-slow) made a splash in labour circles, and was soon popularised by other workers'

movements such as the CGT in France, and members of the IWW (known as Wobblies) in the United States.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the go-slow was actively promoted by the local IWW from at least 1907. But it was during the First World War that the go-slow was employed to good effect. Watersiders, miners, drivers, and tramway men were all going-slow during the war, prompting Defence Minister James Allen to write in 1917, 'It is the most serious problem that we face at the present time... we cannot possibly allow this fatal practice to get hold in New Zealand or else the nation is doomed.' Not only did the go-slow threaten war profits and the government's lucrative trade commandeer with Britain (which made up 90 percent of the country's exports); it had the potential to question the relationships central to the wage system itself. As a result, War Regulations of 16 February 1917 included going-slow in the category of seditious strikes, and many workers were jailed with hard labour.

What these two short examples show is that the go-slow was a powerful tactic for fighting the boss while on the job. Indeed, current labour law—always mindful of the concerns and interests of the employer—defines going-slow as a strike: "the act of a number of employees who wholly or partially stop work or reduce normal performance of work." Yet the go-slow, when used smartly and collectively, is still an excellent means of targeting the boss where it hurts most—in their pocket—without emptying yours. As the IWW saying goes, "Slow Down! The hours are long, the pay is small, so take your time and buck 'em all." @@@

Black Bean Chilli with Cornbread

VEGANS! A lot of anarchists are, but unfortunately for your non-vegan friends sometimes it feels like your veganism is some sort of torture designed to kill all the wonderful tastes in food. But it doesn't have to be that way.

There really aren't any excuses for tasteless casseroles and root vegetable stews these days. Veganism has gone mainstream, it's popular, it's a diet fad, there are stupid books about skinny vegan bitches. And while that means a lot of weird things about diet, and class, and consumerism as political action, it also means there is plenty of good tasting vegan food, and vegan recipes out there. Not just good tasting for vegan, but good tasting period. But to experience this modern marvel and wonder, you need to learn how to cook. Fear not, I'm here to help you.

Today, I'll be sharing a recipe for veggie black bean chilli. It's good, it's cheap, and it makes heaps. This is the basic recipe that I follow whenever I make this dish, but honestly it's pretty forgiving and over time you may want to experiment with what you put in it. Sometimes I add chopped chipotle peppers in adobo sauce (be careful with these, they are very hot), or a whole can of chipotle sauce depending on my mood. You can also make this with a combination of pinto and black beans if you want to be adventurous, just please use plain black beans, don't use those horrible black chilli beans I've seen in stores and made the mistake of buying once. Those absolutely won't do here. You just want plain black beans.

Black Bean Chilli

2 tins black beans, drained and rinsed
1–2 tins chopped tomatoes
1 tin canned corn or 1 cup frozen or fresh corn
1 onion chopped
2 carrots chopped
3–4 cloves of garlic minced
1–2 fresh jalapeño, serrano, or other hot chilli pepper (to taste)
1–2 tablespoons cumin
1 teaspoon chilli powder (to taste)
salt (to taste)
1 tablespoon olive or canola oil
Pinch or two of nutritional yeast (optional, but adds a nice bit of extra flavour if you have it)

Sauté the onions and carrots over medium high heat in a large saucepan or Dutch oven until soft and the onions turn golden brown. Add chillis, cook one minute, add garlic, cumin, chilli powder, salt, and cook until garlic is fragrant and spices and onions start to stick to the bottom of the pan. Add tomatoes, drained beans, corn, stir to mix and bring to the boil, reduce to simmer and cook at low heat until flavours are blended, 30 minutes to one hour (depending on how much time you have and how hungry you are. Adjust seasonings to taste as the chilli cooks. You might need to add a little chilli powder, cumin, salt, or chillis to get more flavour, or add more tomatoes, or tomato paste if you want a milder taste.

To serve, garnish with any combination of suggested garnishes and enjoy with plain corn chips, or go crazy and make yourself some vegan cornbread, recipe below.

Garnish

½ cup chopped spring onion or white onion
½ cup chopped avocado
½ cup chopped cilantro (coriander)
¼ cup halved and sliced radishes
½ cup fresh tomatoes

Cornbread

2 cups cornmeal (if you can't find cornmeal, look for dried polenta, it's the same thing)
1 cup plain or wholemeal flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 tablespoon sugar
⅓ cup canola oil
2 cups soymilk
1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar
½ teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 175°C, grease or line a 22x32cm baking pan with baking paper.

In a bowl whisk together soymilk and vinegar and set aside. In a large bowl, sift together dry ingredients. Add oil to the soymilk mixture, whisk until foamy and bubbly. Pour wet ingredients into dry and mix until combined. Pour into prepared pan and bake 30–35 minutes until toothpick inserted into the centre comes out clean. Serve hot or at room temperature with your chilli @@@

Horribly accurate

Rebellion (L'ordre et la morale)

France 2011

136 minutes

Reviewed by Sam Buchanan



REBELLION is a French film about the events in Kanaky (New Caledonia) in 1988 when FLNKS (Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste) activists attacked a gendarme post on the island of Ouvea, killing several and taking others hostage. The French military stormed the cave where hostages were held, resulting in 20 deaths, 18 of them Kanak. Some were killed after they had surrendered.

Rebellion is well worth a look, partly because it's an excellent, if harrowing film, and one of a very few films that depicts military conflict as a confused, unheroic and terrifying muddle, but mainly because the struggle for Kanak independence, and other events in the Francophone Pacific, have been almost totally forgotten in the English-speaking world. This was a big issue for New Zealand activists back in the 1980s, but now next to nobody knows about it—despite Kanaky being geographically the closest country to New Zealand.

The film is based on the autobiography of an officer in a French gendarme unit sent to police the crisis, so concentrates on the responses of the French military and political establishment to the hostage-taking. In a sense, it is very pro-Kanak, the French establishment is shown as repressive, untrustworthy, unnecessarily aggressive, preferring military action over negotiation, and French politicians as seeking to make political capital out of the event. As usual, the state prefers violent methods over political ones, because it's good at violence. The Kanak activists are portrayed as mostly reasonable and thoughtful people caught up in an unexpected situation. The French title of the film, *L'ordre et la Morale*, refers to a comment made by a French politician to the effect that a violent crackdown was necessary to restore “order and morality”.

What is weak about the film is the lack of examination of the Kanak political response. The FLNKS leadership is represented as staying aloof from events, with no clear explanation of why. The story centres on the actions of Kanak villagers and grassroots activists, and French military officers and politicians, giving an impression of Kanaks as honest, but simple and unsophisticated people, fighting the dishonest and brutal, but complex and sophisticated French. On the positive side, the director (Mathieu Kassowitz, also responsible for *La Haine*) seems to have made a real effort to portray the events accurately, involving local people from Ouvea, including one actor playing his own father.

A bit of history would help the film make sense—there's a reference to Atai, the leader of the 1878 Kanak rebellion, who was beheaded by the French Army and his head sent to a Paris museum. Also mentioned is Eloi Machoro, a Kanak politician and armed struggle leader who was shot and left to die by French gendarmes (from the same unit that is the focus of the film) in 1985. He was, and remains, a popular figure among Kanak youth, once dubbed ‘The Che Guevara of the South Pacific’. The FLNKS was a coalition of pro-independence parties established in 1984 and led at the time by Jean-Marie Tjibaou who was later assassinated by a Kanak activist, after being accused of selling out the Kanak cause @@@